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EPA INITIATES EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTIVITIES, REASSURES PUBLIC ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Release Date: 09/13/2001

Contact Information:

Also available in Spanish: "LA EPA INICIO ACTIVIDADES DE EMERGENCIA Y ASEGURO AL PUBLICO CON RESPECTO A LOS PELIGROS AMBIENTALES"

Environmental News

FOR RELEASE: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2001**EPA INITIATES EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTIVITIES,
REASSURES PUBLIC ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman today announced that EPA is taking steps to ensure the safety of rescue workers and the public at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon disaster sites, and to protect the environment. EPA is working with state, federal, and local agencies to monitor and respond to potential environmental hazards and minimize any environmental effects of the disasters and their aftermath.

At the request of the New York City Department of Health, EPA and the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have been on the scene at the World Trade Center monitoring exposure to potentially contaminated dust and debris. Monitoring and sampling conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday have been very reassuring about potential exposure of rescue crews and the public to environmental contaminants.

EPA's primary concern is to ensure that rescue workers and the public are not exposed to elevated levels of asbestos, acidic gases or other contaminants from the debris. Sampling of ambient air quality found either no asbestos or very low levels of asbestos. Sampling of bulk materials and dust found generally low levels of asbestos.

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The levels of lead, asbestos and volatile organic compounds in air samples taken on Tuesday in Brooklyn, downwind from the World Trade Center site, were not detectable or not of concern.

Additional sampling of both ambient air quality and dust particles was conducted Wednesday night in lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, and results were uniformly acceptable.

A EPA is greatly relieved to have learned that there appears to be no significant levels of asbestos dust in the air in New York City, @ said Administrator Whitman. A We are working closely with rescue crews to ensure that all appropriate precautions are taken. We will continue to monitor closely. @

Public health concerns about asbestos contamination are primarily related to long-term exposure. Short- term, low-level exposure of the type that might have been produced by the collapse of the World Trade Center buildings is unlikely to cause significant health effects. EPA and OSHA will work closely with rescue and cleanup crews to minimize their potential exposure, but the general public should be very reassured by initial sampling.

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EPA and OSHA will continue to monitor and sample for asbestos, and will work with the appropriate officials to ensure that rescue workers, cleanup crews and the general public are properly informed about appropriate steps that should be taken to ensure proper handling, transportation and disposal of potentially contaminated debris or materials.

EPA is taking steps to ensure that response units implement appropriate engineering controls to minimize environmental hazards, such as water sprays and rinsing to prevent or minimize potential exposure and limit releases of potential contaminants beyond the debris site.

EPA is also conducting downwind sampling for potential chemical and asbestos releases from the World Trade Center debris site. In addition, EPA has deployed federal On-Scene Coordinators to the Washington, D.C. Emergency Operations Center, Fort Meade, and FEMA = s alternate Regional Operations Center in Pennsylvania, and has deployed an On-Scene Coordinator to the Virginia Emergency Operations Center.

Under its response authority, EPA will use all available resources and staff experts to facilitate a safe emergency response and cleanup.

EPA will work with other involved agencies as needed to:

~ procure and distribute respiratory and eye protection equipment in cooperation

with the Dept. of Health and Human Services;

~ provide health and safety training upon request;

~ design and implement a site monitoring plan;

~ provide technical assistance for site control and decontamination; and

~ provide some 3000 asbestos respirators, 60 self-contained breathing apparatuses

and 10,000 protective clothing suits to the two disaster sites.

New York Governor George E. Pataki has promised to provide emergency electric generators to New York City in efforts to restore lost power caused by Tuesday's tragedy, and EPA will work with State authorities to expedite any necessary permits for those generators.

OSHA is also working with Consolidated Edison regarding safety standards for employees who are digging trenches because of leaking gas lines underground. OSHA has advised Con Edison to provide its employees with appropriate respirators so they can proceed with emergency work, shutting off gas leaks in the city.

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EPA New England Office Assists in Response to Terrorist Attack

Release Date: 09/14/2001

Contact Information: Andrew Spejewski, EPA Press Office (617-918-1014)

BOSTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's New England Office has responded to the World Trade Center terrorist attack by sending staff and equipment to assist the agency's New York regional office which is responding at the World Trade Center site in Manhattan.

"EPA New England is ready and willing to do everything it can to help our New York regional office in responding to this terrible tragedy," said Robert W. Varney, regional administrator of EPA's New England Office. "We have personnel and equipment there and on the way and we're on call to respond to any further requests."

Shortly after the attacks on Tuesday, all EPA New England emergency response personnel were deployed to their homes with vehicles and response and communications equipment to ensure the regional office's ability to respond in the event of additional attacks or routine hazardous materials incidents in New England.

Additionally, emergency response personnel staffed the EPA desk at the FEMA Federal Regional Center in Maynard, MA (24-hour-a-day operation) through Wednesday. FEMA's Maynard facility was activated because FEMA's regional facility in New York City was non-operational.

At the request of the agency's New York regional office, EPA New England is sending three emergency response on-scene coordinators and one communications specialist to assist efforts at the site. Two staff arrived today at EPA's Field Office in Edison, NJ and two more will be arriving Monday, bringing respirator cartridges and other equipment requested by the agency's New York office. Most of the agency's activity so far is focused on testing air quality for asbestos, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and lead to ensure the safety of response personnel and adjacent neighborhoods.

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EPA, OSHA UPDATE ASBESTOS DATA, CONTINUE TO REASSURE PUBLIC ABOUT CONTAMINATION FEARS

Release Date: 09/14/2001

Contact Information:

Also available in Spanish: "INFORMACION ACTUALIZADA DE LA EPA Y OSHA SOBRE ASBESTO CONTINUA TRANQUILIZANDO AL PUBLICO GENERAL CON RESPECTO A TEMORES DE CONTAMINACION"

Environmental News

FOR RELEASE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2001

EPA, OSHA UPDATE ASBESTOS DATA,

CONTINUE TO REASSURE PUBLIC ABOUT CONTAMINATION FEARS

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Sue Hensley, Dept. of Labor (OSHA) 202-693-6023

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Labor's Occupational Health and Safety Administration today announced that the majority of air and dust samples monitored at the crash site and in Lower Manhattan do not indicate levels of concern for asbestos. The new samples confirm previous reports that ambient air quality meets OSHA standards and consequently is not a cause for public concern. New OSHA data also indicates that indoor air quality in downtown buildings will meet standards. EPA has found variable asbestos levels in bulk debris and dust on the ground, but EPA continues to believe that there is no significant health risk to the general public in the coming days. Appropriate steps are being taken to clean up this dust and debris.

A Our tests show that it is safe for New Yorkers to go back to work in New York's financial district, @ said John L. Henshaw, Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA. A Keeping the streets clean and being careful not to track dust into buildings will help protect workers from remaining debris. @

OSHA staff walked through New York's financial district on September 13th, wearing personal air monitors and collected data on potential asbestos exposure levels. All but two samples contained no asbestos. Two samples contained very low levels of an unknown fiber, which is still being analyzed.

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Air Samples taken on Sept. 13th inside buildings in New York = s financial district were negative for asbestos. Debris samples collected outside buildings on cars and other surfaces contained small percentages of asbestors, ranging from 2.1 to 3.3 B slightly above the 1 percent trigger for defining asbestos material.

A EPA will be deploying 16 vacuum trucks this weekend in an effort to remove as much of the dust and debris as possible from the site where the samples were obtained,@ said EPA Administrator Christie Whitman. A In addition we will be moving six continuous air monitoring stations into the area. We will put five near ground zero and one on Canal Street. The good news continues to be that the air samples we have taken have all been at levels that cause us no concern.@

The continuous monitoring stations will augment the ambient air quality monitoring located in Brooklyn. EPA and OSHA will remain on site and continue to monitor for levels of asbestos, PCBs, lead and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in the area throughout the long weeks of cleanup ahead. In addition, EPA will move in a bus that has the equipment to do instant analysis of volatile organic compound samples from air at the site. It is called a Total Atmospheric Gas Analyzer and is similar to a unit used during the Gulf War to sample emissions from the oil fires in Kuwait.

The Agency is recommending that businesses in the area planning to reopen next week take precautions including cleaning air conditioning filters and using vacuums with appropriate filters to collect dust. Vacuuming will reduce the chance of re-entering workers tracking dust into the buildings. This work is already underway by city agencies.

The U.S. Coast Guard will be assisting EPA in monitoring impacts, if any, of today= s rainstorms on the water quality. However, most of the rainflow is expected to be handled by the City= s waste water treatment facility, since there will be only limited sewage in the combined sewer system. EPA has a vessel on site in New York to handle any necessary testing.

Additional technical support has been offered to EPA in New York from the U.S. Air Force Surgeon General= s Office of Environmental and Occupational Health. That support would involve five engineers and/or environmental technicians and equipment if needed.

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